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ABSTRACT

This booklet focuses on folklore in America, with the aim of providing English teachers with a better understanding of the subject. Articles include (1) "Collecting Folklore" which is a discussion of the nature of folklore as well as beliefs, folk music, games, arts and crafts, and the collecting of folk material; and (2) "American Folk Tradition" which explores old traditions as well as new ones, the varying concepts of folklore, children's folklore, the instability of folklore in its outward form and its stability in essential content, and the lore of various peoples (e.g., those in New York, New England, and Rockies, and the Spanish Southwest, and the French, Negroes, Scandinavians, Mormons, and children). A partially annotated bibliography contains material listed under six headings: general, American folklore, the folktale, folk song, proverb and riddle, and periodicals. (JMC)

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COLLECTING FOLKLORE

AMERICAN FOLK TRADITION

BOOKS FOR READING

TE 002 303

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CONTENTS

COLLECTING FOLKLORE 1

Carlos C. Drake

Lydia M. Fish

Donald Hines

Roger Mitchell

William Pierson

Alexandra Ramsay

AMERICAN FOLK TRADITION 8

Stith Thompson

BOOKS FOR READING 20

Charles D. Blaney

FORWORD

The essays and reading list in this collection concern folklore, a subject not always understood by teachers of English and other subjects. One of the dominant reasons for this is the manner in which the publishers of many elementary and secondary school textbooks treat the subject. Radio and television also contribute to this confusion. Popular magazines and newspapers often contain articles on folklore topics, but in many instances these articles are "fakelore."

It is hoped, then, that teachers will have a better understanding of this subject after they read these essays and survey some of the books listed in "Books for Reading." The reading list is not complete; there are some books that other people would not include. Let the list serve as a beginning.

Teachers and students might have much interest in collecting folklore in their communities, according to the suggestions offered in "Collecting Folklore" and the various areas listed in "American Folk Tradition."

Collecting folklore is only the beginning. The material you collect should not be stored away; it should become a part of the work done by others, so that it may be studied, classified, and used. Dr. Linda Degh and her graduate students in the Folklore Institute at Indiana University are willing to help you. Contact Mrs. Degh at the Folklore Institute. If you prefer, send her written copies of your collection. Your material will become part of the Folklore Archives. In this way, the collection of folklore from Indiana will be more complete.

COLLECTING FOLKLORE

CARLOS C. DRAKE
LYDIA M. FISH
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INTRODUCTION

Does America really care about its past? One wouldn't think so from the way it treats its folklore. Most European countries think of their folklore as a precious national heritage, but not America. In this country folklore collectors are few and far between, and this is largely because most people here have not realized that an important part of their past is being lost without their knowing about it. Numerous countries, such as Ireland and Finland, many times smaller than America, have much larger folklore programs backed up by many professional and nonprofessional collectors.

Americans often wonder what value their folklore has, and to what practical uses it can be put. When they can buy something factory-made, why should they use a clumsier object their grandparents used? Why should they tell stories to each other and sing songs when television is much more interesting? The unfortunate and sad thng is that so much hard-earned knowledge gained over generations is lost this way. It isn't that factory-made products are less worthwhile than the old hand-made ones, or that TV and radio are somehow not as entertaining as the old forms of amusement; it is just that these old ways—the hand-made objects, the stories and songs—were personal and meant something to the people who used them and told them. It might even be a mistake to use the old hand-made tool, and probably would be to use the old hand-loaded guns. The point is that these things can be appreciated for what they are even if they are not put to any practical use. They show us how things were done in a time we'll know little about; they give us a sense of the past. It is for this reason that collecting folklore can be so interesting. The folklore collector becomes a kind of detective, since he must sniff out folklore where it exists and then try to understand its meaning.

The first problem confronting the folklore collector is being able to recognize folklore when he sees it. This is not always easy. Fifty or a hundred years ago, when communities were more isolated and people did not have the automobile for transportation, they depended more on themselves to supply the things they needed. Some of this knowledge they gained themselves, but much of it had been handed down to them by their parents and grandparents. Thus they grew up learning home cures (because the nearest doctor might be three hours away) and weather predictions (because their crops had to be planted at the right time) and much other useful information—perhaps even how to ward off evil spirits. They also learned stories and songs which were often their only entertainment.

Folklore is thus the word-of-mouth knowledge that is passed on from one generation to the next, and is the most cherished history a family can have. From this total the professional folklorist sorts out the different kinds of lore, that is, beliefs, stories, proverbs, games, songs, dances, and folk arts. The folklore collector has first of all to make himself aware of the different kinds of lore so that he can spot them easily; he must then learn the best way to collect them. The following sections describe some of the different kinds of lore he may want to collect, and the last section suggests ways in which he can go about it.

BELIEFS

A folk belief is a belief or custom that does not need immediate proof to convince the person holding it that it is right, or works. These include water witching, carrying a bride over a threshold for luck, home remedies, and body superstitions; beliefs about courtship and marriage, the home, birth, luck, and death, and beliefs about food, animals, and the weather; also proverbs which state beliefs in a precise form. Absurd as some of these may seem, all were serious in their beginnings. The study of their origins and later modifications is richly rewarding because not only are the fears and desires of the past sometimes revealed, but also occasionally the basis of modern ideas and prejudices. To try to understand folk beliefs gives us a deeper knowledge of human nature in general. The folklore collector can start with his own beliefs or those of his family. Most of us have at least a few about the weather, or about certain special days (for instance, Friday the 13th) or about some special place. By first examining our own, and becoming aware of them, we become better able to recognize those of others.

STORIES AND LEGENDS

Most Americans begin life by having fairy tales read to them and end up by reading them in turn to their children. Since folklore depends on spoken tradition, those tales which come from printed sources are of little value in folklore research. Experience has shown that in every town and in the surrounding countryside there exist traditional narratives of all sorts—tales that are heard in one's childhood, yarns spun by old timers, legends about locations and their names, remembrances of a grandfather's journey to America, or his part in some famous event. It is these varied and seemingly disjointed stories that folklorists want to collect. This is not history in the usual sense, with exact dates, population figures, and other facts. It is full of the personal touch. Some examples are:

STORIES

Tales of the extraordinary: marvelous heroes, castles, witches, fantastic tasks, and fabulous animals

Humorous stories: tricks, horse swapping, peddlers, salesmen, immigrants, politicians, stupid people

Tall tales: marvelous dogs, snakes, mosquitoes; remarkable weather and events, great hunters, fishermen and strong men

LEGENDS

Historical: Civil War and Indian fighting, run-away slaves, lynchings, famous men — such as generals, statesmen, and frontiersmen

Family history: coming to America, moving westward, the Gold Rush, feuds

Local characters: famous liars, ingenious or tricky people, strong men and great hunters

Travelling men: peddlers, gypsies, hoboes

Geographical features: tales concerning drownings, murders, and suicides connected with rocks, ponds, streams, hills, caves, and Indian mounds, explanations for names like Scarcity Fat Ridge, Gnaw Bone, or Jack's Defeat Creek

Buried treasure and lost mines: the Indian silver mines

4

The supernatural: haunted houses, irremovable blood stains, return of the dead, mysterious lights, graveyards and strange marks on tombstones, bargains made with the devil

FOLK MUSIC

Folk music includes folksongs—ballads (narrative songs), worksongs and parodies—and instrumental music. The origins of folk music are not important; we may or we may not be able to trace the composer. Of course, many folksongs have been written down, but the written versions usually have little effect on the folk musicians.

Who sings folksongs? Most people do, surprisingly enough. Almost every family has at least *one* "handed-down" song, and many camp songs, army songs, college songs and children's songs are traditional. Practically everyone knows songs that he has learned from his family or friends, rather than from a songbook. If you would like to get some sort of idea of the types of songs traditional in your area, try one of the standard collections like Lomax's *Folksong USA,* or a collection of local songs like Brewster's *Ballads and Songs of Indiana.*

Instrumental folkmusic is also widespread, especially dance music. The easiest way to find this music in your community is to get in touch with the local square-dance band. Most fiddlers and banjo players know many traditional tunes. In fact, it is unusual for such a musician to learn music from a printed source.

Even if you can't read music, you can collect folksongs. Note the name of the singer, his home town and where he learned the song, and then write down the words of the song exactly as he sings them. Ask a musician for a list of the tunes he can play. If you have a tape recorder, of course, you can also collect the tunes and instrumental music.

GAMES

Generally speaking, any form of amusement or pastime is a game. Not all games require special materials, as do hopscotch, cat's cradle, cards, or the many games played with balls. Children's games such as tag and hide-and-seek may be constructed in many ways, yet are often overlooked by the folklore collector.

It has been said that games are social activities, and so

more than one must play. In this sense, then, no game is possible without rules (which may be changed by the participants) which are understood by all the players. The aim is to sort the winner from the loser, and to determine who is better or best at a particular form of play. An example is the contest with the phrase, "Last one in's a monkey's uncle," which starts a competition in many contexts— to be first among the group to get into the house, to jump into the swimming pool, to get into bed at night, and so forth.

In another example, the rules are set up by the child who says, "Tickle, tickle on the knee, if you laugh you don't love me." He is the winner if he can make his playmate laugh.

Play activity, unlike games, is solitary. Girls playing house and boys playing at hunter, for example, include lore in their activities.

Riddles and other guessing games are a form of folklore often used by children, and these too can be collected.

The folklore collector, when he has the opportunity to observe or inquire about either children's or adult's games, should note, as well as the rules, materials of the games, the season in which they are played, where they are played, and the number, sex, and ages of the participants.

ARTS AND CRAFTS

Folk arts are found in many varieties and forms, but all of them have resulted from knowledge passed on by word of mouth, often from one generation to the next. Carpentry was once such a craft, and the homemade tools of the pioneer carpenters are today considered examples of folk art. The houses, churches, and mills that the early settlers built, such as those at Spring Mill, and at New Harmony, Indiana, are also examples of folk art, since the engineering knowledge used to build them was often nonprofessional and probably passed on from father to son. We still see an occasional covered bridge, and these are usually folk art. The early home crafts such as weaving and pottery, which are still practiced in some places today, are also folk arts, and there are many others. Designs that people invent for their homemade articles, and also the symbols, such as the hex signs used by the Pennsylvania farmers on their barns, are also folk art. The main thing to remember is that the folk art, be it a craft or a skill or a particular article, results from a knowledge that has been

passed on within a community or family and is highly individual. It is indeed the individuality that folk art possesses that makes the collecting of it so interesting, since the particular (and sometimes unique) example expresses something of the personality behind it and it is never an assembly-line product.

Folk arts can be collected in many ways. In some cases the best that can be done is to photograph the article and then attempt to describe it and its background as completely as possible.

COLLECTING

Many collections begin with the collector himself acting as informant, and collecting is no harder than putting down what we have seen and heard. When we begin to collect from others, it is best if the folklore is recorded in the words of the informant, exactly as it was told. In this way there is no doubt as to the veracity of the material, and it can then be used by others as if they themselves had been there. First of all, folklore collections should contain the name, age, occupation, and something about the background of each informant, in addition to the item collected. Then, of course, there are the texts and explanatory notes about them. A good collection, then, will contain more than the simple recording of items; for a song the collector would indicate where and when it was liable to be sung, who would sing it, adults or children, and other information of a similar nature. Usually the collector attempts to discover where, when, and from whom the informant learned the item of folklore so as to be aware of the historical range of the item, and perhaps, even to be able to trace an item back to its beginning in another era. The reason collections follow this general form is so that they can be studied by people in the future to whom this information might not be available.

Although the ideal collector restricts himself to asking questions, and following a set procedure—for his own benefit, but also to make the task of comparing the responses from a number of people easier for anyone else—the ideal method employed in one circumstance, with one informant, may not be successful in other instances. The handling of people and the business of collecting are inseparably bound. The folklore collector's attitude towards his informant is essentially one of courtesy and common sense, but certain basic cautions are necessary. Many a beginning collector may be guilty of offenses that might otherwise seem harmless. He should remember not to argue

with his informant, not to correct his grammar or pronunciation, not to comment on his slowness in responding. On the opposite side, in overcoming difficulties which the informant may have (he may be considered lazy because he prefers to sit and talk, he may be accused of being old fashioned, or even of giving away secrets, in some cases), the collector should show his enthusiasm and genuine appreciation of his informant's contributions, not a difficult thing to do. The beginning collector will find that his personal attitude is far more rewarding, to himself and to those who use his materials, than anything else.

A problem may arise in asking questions which the informant cannot answer. This *can* have the effect of putting him on the defensive to explain his tradition. His embarrassment at not being able to answer, and the implication that he is ignorant or that there is something wrong, may discourage him, or, instead of admitting ignorance, he may attempt to please you with what he thinks you want to hear. Despite the truth of the situation, the folklore collector must adopt the policy that his informant is always right. This may not be so in a strict sense, but there is a sense in which it is true, the folkloristic one. Much that is now part of folklore may have had its beginnings in this manner. This sort of material, as well as an informant's saying he doesn't know any cure for baldness (lack of an answer is also valid information) should be recorded.

The folklore collector attempts as much as possible to encourage an interest and intelligent understanding of the procedure and goal of the work. This means taking out some time to explain what is wanted (see the Introduction). The degree to which such explanations are made depends, of course, on the informant's possible interest.

If at all possible, it is best to use a tape recorder when talking with an informant. In this way his beliefs and stories can be taken down exactly. Also folksongs can be recorded with their instrumental and melodic accompaniment. Many inexpensive portable battery-run recorders are now available.

AMERICAN FOLK TRADITION

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Travelers to our shores always have been impressed with the uniformity of American life. Sometimes in praise, sometimes in censure, they have described the outward aspects of living as seen from the Rio Grande north. With minor differences at the boundary, they have observed a remarkable sameness from ocean to ocean and far into Canada: the same skyscrapers or aspiring skyscrapers, the same gas stations, radio and television programs, movie houses, chain stores, the same types of school buildings, and the same syndicated newspaper columns. These types have been evolved through the generations as a result of our prodigious and restless activity, and they are often the models which the whole world strives to imitate. They have made life easier, if not always more pleasant and refined. They have been important in smoothing out differences in thought and attitudes throughout the land, and they have all played their part in molding from diverse elements in a new race.

But if America is one, it is also many. Its remarkable unity rests upon a solid foundation of differences. Even its types so clearly apparent to the stranger—its tireless and enterprising business men, breezy Westerners, club women, professors, doctors, laborers, technicians — dissolve upon closer acquaintance into a host of individual variations within the general pattern. Whole regions show their peculiar characteristics of physical types, of historic background, of mental habits, and often of the most fundamental racial qualities. Bluenoses from Halifax, Canucks from Quebec, and Cajuns from Louisiana, New England Yankees, Negroes from the Deep South and elsewhere, Pennsylvania Germans, Minnesota Swedes, Utah Mormons, and the whole race of miners and lumbermen—these and many such are instantly recognizable, and their peculiar characteristics resist all efforts at complete standardization.

THE NEW AND THE OLD

If the impression of absolute uniformity in American life proves upon closer scrutiny to be ill-founded, the same may be said of an equally wide opinion that American life is all new. It is true that we are in a state of constant change. Our cities are being continually rebuilt; styles and customs

shift over night; our highways are filled with travelers going without seeming purpose from one place to another; our cities are crowded with unassimilated newcomers from home or abroad. We seem to be surrounded by the new and to be living in a world born only yesterday.

But the roots of American life go deep. Not only have our aboriginal tribes inhabited this land for thousands of years, but our older European settlers—English, French, and Spanish—have now reached their tenth or twelfth generation. In some nooks the ways and habits of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries continue almost unaffected by the twentieth. Modern life there is at most a thin veneer. Old habits of thought, old customs, old songs, old tales continue even in our own day in many groups who are still affected by a community of tradition based on a long common history. And it is not only among our older populations, our Indians, Negroes, Southern mountaineers, or Yankee farmers that we find evidences of age. More recent immigrants from all parts of the world have manned our industries and settled our farms, and though they have fitted into American life, they have brought with them a consciousness of the land from which they came. Nothing has served better to keep fresh the memories that bind these groups together than the conscious preservation of their traditions and forms of entertainment. Even in our great cities may be found an ancient folklore representing every people of the Old World.

Beneath the superficial sameness and the newness of the cultural pattern that is America there lies, then, a substratum of tradition surprising in its variety and richness. Though these older patterns seem in some places almost obliterated, there are other parts of the country and other groups of people where they are still vital and significant. Not only the memories of the fathers, but the very habits of thought which governed the lives of other generations are handed on. Thus old traditions are repeated and kept fresh and continually adapted to a changing world. Crops are still planted here and there under a favorable moon after the immemorial fashion of the ancestors, and such illogical beliefs and practices extend even to new technologies and inventions. Gremlins replace fairies and dwarfs in the airplane and a badge of Saint Christopher protects the Ford car as it did the medieval traveler. Such groups still compose new songs about local events and sing them in the traditional manner of their people.

These old folk patterns are a natural part of everyday life and there is seldom any consciousness that they are antiquated or quaint or that they do not fit in with the world of today. It needs only understanding and affection to feel the fine integrity of those who continue to love and practice the ancient ways of their people. Unforgettable characters are the old sailors, lumberjacks, miners, and mountaineers who have furnished the songs and legends that continue to make our folklore a vital and growing part of the life of our land.

Of course, there are also large sections of our country and important groups of people who have not only memories of such traditions but keep them tenaciously as memories. They are conscious of preserving an inheritance from the past. The attitude of such groups varies from place to place. Sometimes their use of folklore is purely nostalgic. By repeating old songs or dancing old dances they seek to revive something that is gone. Or it may be that those possessing such memories have the antiquarian's interest in the old because it is old. They are careful to hand on what they have received without change and are concerned that the record be as complete and faithful as possible. Both of these groups possess actual folk tradition and differ only because one approach is essentially romantic, the other essentially scholarly. As opposed to those who have an active habit of creating folklore, the two groups just considered are dealing with a dead tradition.

VARYING CONCEPTS OF FOLKLORE

All but universal, then, even in the new world is the persistence of folk tradition, though its importance in our culture has not always been recognized. When our scholars in the late nineteenth century became interested they found that their European colleagues already had staked out a new field of study. All during the eighteenth century collectors had recorded old songs, first in England and Scotland and then, later, in other parts of Europe. With the beginning of the nineteenth century had come the assiduous collecting of folktales and local traditions and the first interest in the traditional life of primitive peoples. By a century or so ago (1846) the study of all kinds of material of this sort brought about the need for some term descriptive of the whole field. "Popular antiquities" was unsatisfactory because it seemed inapplicable to folk literature. The term *folklore* then proposed was a word-coinage

going back to the Anglo-Saxon *folk* and *lore*. This new word rapidly took hold in the learned vocabulary of nearly all European countries and is now as international a word as telephone or automobile.

As generally accepted and understood today, the term *folklore* covers a prodigious area. The exact limit of this domain is a question for the scholar and is of little real concern to those who observe folklore as a part of life or to those who collect and publish. Often a man has his own special interest, and to him folklore means that and nothing more.

One collector finds his folklore only in American versions of Old English ballads—Barbara Allen or Gypsy Davy; or in equally old British love lyrics. To another, folklore is a mountain song, old or new, and whether sung in the native hills or by a so-called hillbilly troupe over the radio or television. The interest of most folklorists is confined not only to a general subject like songs: specialization goes much further. One man's folklore is cowboy songs; another's deal with modern tragic ballads of murders or railroad wrecks; another is interested in long haul and short haul shanteys or songs about a sailor's adventures on land or in storm. A whole lifetime may be spent on such apparently narrow fields as lumberjack songs and legends or those of the miners of coal or gold; on Negro spirituals or worldly songs and their relations to Africa and to American hymnology; on old English carols in the Southern mountains; on play-party songs; or on the wordless tunes played by old fiddlers the country over.

More and more in recent years, certain men have devoted their interests to the tales and legends current in our land. Some resurrect accounts of early heroes like Mike Fink or Davy Crockett. Others love to collect what is perhaps the most typical American stories, the absurd exaggerations known as "tall tales." A smaller number of enthusiasts bring together traditions of peculiar characters: legends of how certain mountains or lakes or streams were formed; or hair-raising adventures with ghosts and witches and devils. Not least interesting to many students is the discovery and study of fairy tales brought in from the Old World and now thoroughly at home in French Canada or in the Virginia mountains or even among our American Indian tribes.

The folksong and the folktale are by no means the only subjects thought of when one mentions American folklore.

Whole volumes purporting to be the folklore of certain areas contain nothing but superstitions or cures for toothache or warts. Others specialize on signs for predicting the weather or the condition of the moon proper for planting crops. Such traditional beliefs and practices were the primary concern of the first generation who called themselves "folklorists," and it has never ceased to attract a major share of attention from students of popular tradition.

There are points where the folklorist comes very close to becoming a historian. This is especially true when he interests himself in a revival of the memory of pioneer life or attempts to reconstruct a true picture of the cattle trail or of the life of sailors on clipper ships. For many the interest in traditional material products is likely to turn to old textile patterns, to methods of weaving handed down through the generations, and to the intricate ways in which quilts are pieced in particular communities. With such studies the folklorist finds that, perhaps without knowing it, he has become an ethnologist.

CHILDREN'S FOLKLORE

Another group of specialists may find their books shelved in the children's section in the library. For their interests lie in such fairy tales as children love; in the songs, dances, and games used on the playgrounds, in rope-skipping rhymes, cumulative stories, and tongue-twisters. Children's folklore has such great interest and has attracted such able scholars that one of the most difficult tasks of other folklorists is to persuade people that their work may also deal with the activities of adult persons.

Even with this considerable list, the multitude of forms which the interest in popular tradition may take is by no means exhausted. For we have not mentioned the man who is curious about cattle brands or the markings which lumbermen use to identify their logs, and we have omitted the whole question of folk dances, considered by not a few people as the only form of folklore worthy of attention.

STABILITY VERSUS INSTABILITY

It is no great matter if we should sometimes include or exclude one or another item in our definition of folklore. But it is important that all those interested in the material of popular tradition should recognize its most striking character-

istic—its instability in outward form and its stability in essential content. Handed about as it is from person to person, it suffers continually from the defect of human memory and sometimes from mistakes of comprehension. But its basic integrity is usually preserved, because every attempt to deviate from a well-known pattern is checked by others who have also learned it. We shall not, therefore, seek for a standard text of a folksong or tale or legend, but recognize in the very multiplicity of forms it has assumed the best proof that it is an authentic piece of folklore.

In all those societies, primitive or not, where the people are illiterate or awkward in the use of books, practically every aspect of life is governed by tradition which, in all its outward manifestations is extremely shifting and fluid. When reading becomes habitual, the book may crystallize these forms and may, indeed, drive out oral tradition altogether. As living folklore, an item may pass over into literature or written history and cease to undergo the hazards of forgetfulness or capricious change. But sometimes such a tradition may be learned from reading and told or sung or otherwise reported so acceptably that it reenters the stream of actual folklore. Thus many old European tales are given a standard form through the literary tact and understanding of the Grimm brothers. While the tales continue to be read exactly as the Grimms wrote them, there are hundreds of clear examples which show that these tales read a century ago by European peasants were passed on by them through word of mouth and again underwent all the changes that proved that they were once more an actual part of a floating tradition.

Even an actual piece of literature, the production of a known author, may receive this same treatment and eventually take on all the unstable characteristics of the actual folktale or folksong. If it comes to be handed on from person to person rather than read from a book or learned from a music score even such "art songs" as *Fair Charlotte* and the Crockett legends emanating from the journalistic Crockett Almanacs may claim the consideration of the folklorist.

Perhaps the student of actual folklore in America should not be too concerned whether everything hailed by that name is genuine. There is more than enough of the real to engage the efforts of all true devotees of popular tradition. Even in our culture millions of persons have received from tradition most

that they know of history, of medicine, of the nature and habits of animals and plants, of the techniques of agriculture and the trades, of literature and philosophy, and of law. Millions still sing and prefer old music and old songs, old dances and amusements, and old festivals and ceremonies.

THE PEOPLE AND THEIR LORE

Of authentic folklore of this kind, actual songs, tales or beliefs that have lived and been passed on from person to person, there is an enormous wealth in America. It is by no means uniform or evenly spread over the continent. Except for a few well-known forms, it is hard to speak of American folklore at all. It varies profoundly as we move from one geographic region, or from one racial or occupational group, to another. Some folksongs—especially of the Anglo-Irish tradition—are nearly nationwide, and also some legends and tall tales, but region by region and group by group, the entire emphasis and center of interest shifts. Because of peculiar combinations present in the original settlement or because of unusual isolation there has developed within various geographic, racial, or industrial units a distinctive body of popular tradition. Some of the most striking of these have been of special interest to folklorists.

New York. Since the days of Washington Irving, upstate New York has seemed the proper place for the cavortings of headless horsemen and ancient ghosts rolling ninepins, but the great wealth of legend of all kinds was largely unknown until recent years. Not only the older Dutch and British populations and the Iroquois Indians, but dozens of more recent immigrant groups have contributed their songs and stories and practices to men like Carl Carmer, Harold W. Thompson, and Louis C. Jones. Perhaps no state has been so thoroughly explored for its folklore.

New England. Though separated from New York for the most part by an imaginary line, the New England states have an old and different history and consequently a distinctive folklore. One is much more conscious there of survivals from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, of unbroken and unmixed traditions brought a long time ago from the British Isles. Some of the finest examples of older English ballads survive in New England and a number of Old World tales and legends hardly to be found elsewhere on this side of the water. Because much of this material interested the reading public of a century

ago, the collector must not only interview those who remember old things but must turn over many books and newspapers where they were written down for our great-grandfathers.

The Maritime Provinces. The international boundary to the northeast does not indicate an abrupt change of populations, but when one finds himself well into the Maritime Provinces, especially if he goes as far as Nova Scotia, he will discover a peculiar mixture of French, German, Highland Scottish, Irish, English, and at least two groups who came from New England in Colonial times. Perhaps nowhere else in America are found as beautiful old English lyric songs or traditional ballads. The three non-English speaking peoples have been together for two centuries or more and though their traditions have remained apart, each group has markedly influenced the other.

The Southern Mountains. For many Americans, the mention of folklore immediately suggests our Southern mountaineers. We have long known that the populations of these Highlands posses a wealth of song and legend handed down from their fathers. Largely because of their isolation, they have kept with remarkable fidelity many an old word and turn of expression, and it is still possible to find singers and story-tellers carrying on in a new world habits of entertainment which go back to seventeenth century England. The general patterns of folklore for this region extend somewhat widely on all sides—in the West even to the Ozark country.

The Middle Western Pioneers. Many of these songs and customs of the Southern mountains were known a hundred years ago throughout the entire Middle West. They were essentially an aspect of the pioneer life of those who settled the rich farm lands between the Appalachians and the treeless plains. They have not been entirely forgotten, but where they are found they serve only as memories of a way of life that is gone. Of marked prominence in this area were the play-party song and the square dance. If there was any portion of this region especially distinctive for its folklore, it was along the great river highways, the Ohio and the Mississippi, so filled with excitement and adventure a century ago. It was here that hero legends of Davy Crockett and Mike Fink flourished. Though they largely passed out of the memory of man, they now have been revived and live again for a new generation.

The Rockies and Beyond. Our frontier kept moving. After the Middle West began to fill, the adventurous followed the call of the trapper's life in the great Western mountains and then with the discovery of gold and the wealth of the California and Oregon countries they turned prospectors and ranchers. In opening up these vast stretches of the West, they created a new pattern of life, filled with picturesque detail. The covered wagon, the stagecoach racing over mountain roads, the pony express, the Indian fighter, the squaw man, the desperado, and the simple but heroic immigrant family plagued by desert and heartbreaking distance but spurred on by some elusive dream—all these have become a part of the world of fancy, not only for us Americans but for romantic souls of every land. This way of life produced its own folklore, its extravagant tales, its romantic songs, its grotesque humor, and its heroic legends.

As one examines American tradition, it becomes clear that what we have is not one folklore, but many, that certain groups maintain such a common body of song, story, and custom that their unity is apparent to everyone. Sometimes, such a grouping is geographical and includes the people of a whole region—New York, New England, or the Middle West. But quite as important a force in establishing such a unit is the consciousness of a common past dependent upon race or nation or language. In a land made up of many peoples like America such a feeling is very persistent in spite of all the conscious and unconscious forces which tend to break down their differences.

The French in America. Time was when the dominant power in interior America was France. Her domain stretched from the lower St. Lawrence to the lower Mississippi. Over this whole area there remain not only memories of her dominion, but very considerable populations still speaking French and still carrying on in varying degrees the lore and customs brought from the France of Louis XIV. This folklore remains not only in Quebec, around St. Genevieve in Missouri, and in Louisiana, but in lesser degree in settlements like Vincennes. It is interesting not only because of the beauty of the folksongs and the real charm of many of its tales, but also because it shows the persistence of old memories after two centuries in the new land.

The Spanish Southwest. Longest settled of all our European groups are the Spanish-speaking people of the Southwest. Many of these, of course, are Mexican in background but there are also many whose ancestors came more than three centuries

ago from Spain. Their folklore has remained almost purely Spanish. The religious note is always prominent. Nowhere north of Mexico is the ancient religious festival, with so many details reaching back over the centuries to medieval Spain, celebrated so elaborately as in New Mexico and Arizona. Nowhere else can be found such productions of the religious folk drama—plays celebrating Christmas or Easter or the conflicts of Christians and Moors. Here, too, the humble poets make up ballads about disasters and tragedies, but they are patterned not after our old English ballads, but after the Mexican corrida and more remotely the Spanish romance.

The Negroes. In contrast to the population groups just mentioned with their concentration within fairly definite areas, Negroes are unevenly but very widely scattered over the continent. The best of their folklore has been found in the deep South, in certain large cities, and, surprisingly enough, in Nova Scotia. As might well be expected, the songs, tales, customs, and beliefs are basically African, but they show the results of many generations in America, most of them spent in servitude to white masters. Especially important has been their contribution to American music.

Scandinavians of the Northwest. Immigration from the Old World to America has never ceased. In the last half of the nineteenth century, invaluable additions were made to our population by the coming of the Scandinavians into Minnesota and the surrounding states and into the Pacific Northwest. They have made excellent citizens and have committed themselves thoroughly to the ways of American life. But even in the second and third generations they retain memories of their home land and preserve many of its traditions. They are still close enough to the time of the migration to have learned these things from their fathers and they carry them on even after language has changed and other memories of Scandinavia have vanished. Especially interesting to the student of folklore is the fact that what he hears in the Northwest today represents a Scandinavian legend or tale as it was brought over in the 1870's. In the old country these traditions undergo continuous change. Here they are definitely fixed by the date of the migration, if they survive at all.

The Large City. Our great cities are compounded of the peoples of many lands. A great industrial center like Detroit is a magnet which draws not only the workers for factories, but all classes who minister to the wants of the great sections of the

city where live the Poles, the Armenians, or the Italians. Much of this movement into Detroit has taken place within a generation, so that material still can be gathered from those who learned it in their Old World homes. Fortunately, the large program of systematic collecting of the folk traditions of the various groups in Detroit, which has now proceeded for some years, is showing the great wealth and human significance of this folklore not only to students and the American public in general but to the Old World groups themselves. More and more they are taking pride in the age-old inheritance they have brought to the New World.

Occupational Groups: Miners, Sailors, Cowboys, Lumberjacks. Unity in traditional practices, stories, and songs comes not only from the living in a restricted area or the membership in some ethnic group, but may arise quite as well from some common occupation. This is particularly true if the work entails isolation, long periods of hardship and danger, and practices and techniques peculiar to the members of the group. In America with its multitude of old and highly organized trades and industries, each with its own lore, a few have been studied better than others. The coal miners, mostly in the Eastern states, and the gold and silver miners, largely concentrated in the West, have many things in common; but the songs of the former are especially distinctive. The men who sailed before the mast, especially in the days of the great clipper ships, had their shanteys to work by, their omens for predicting the weather, their songs of disaster at sea and romance on land which have not been forgotten even today by the sailors on the Great Lakes or the two oceans.

The cowboys who rode the cattle trail from Texas to Wyoming developed their own songs and a picturesque life which has now become a part of the great American tradition. Within the past century we have become aware of the picturesque aspects of the life of men who work in our great forests. The long weeks they must spend together in the depths of the woods has expressed itself chiefly in two ways. They have built up a legendary figure in the giant lumberman, Paul Bunyan, and have given him a whole cycle of adventures, and they have sung in their songs the comedy and tragedy of their daily life.

Mormons. America has been the traditional home of religious freedom. Here have come dozens of sects from the Old World to carry on their peculiar tenets and often to add to the flavor of American life by distinctive garbs or forms of speech, and we have developed important religious

movements ourselves, such as those of the Shakers and the Mormons. The latter have played a very important role in American history, especially in opening up the great West. The extraordinary account of the founding, the pilgrimage and sufferings of the pioneers, the miraculous legends of divine help as well as the social complications in the days of polygamy —all these have produced a body of lore interesting not only to the students of our history, but to all those who like to study the mutual relations of a religion and its believers.

Children. Many other cross sections of American life yield interesting folklore. It is often true, for example, that women have different sets of practices and beliefs and entertain themselves in a different way from men, but nobody has made any especial study of this fact. One large part of the entire population, however, has received a great deal of attention not only from folklorists, but from teachers, singers, and the supervisors of dancing and children's playgrounds. Many of the games of children and the songs which accompany them are very old and are scattered over the earth in a surprising manner. They keep changing year by year and from place to place. Here, if anywhere, we find in all parts of America a folklore that is living and growing and is full of meaning for all those who practice it.

What use shall be made of these remains of long established patterns of thought and custom and entertainment? The answer certainly will be different for the public singer or entertainer and for the scholar. Whether it is used for pure enjoyment or as one of the most effective ways of learning about our cultural life and the ways in which our traditions have operated, the acquaintance with this body of folklore cannot fail to bring with it an increased consciousness of the rich growth from the soil which underlies even the most superficial manifestations of American life.

20

BOOKS TO READ

CHARLES D. BLANEY
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GENERAL

Clarke, Kenneth, and Mary Clarke. *A Concise Dictionary of Folklore.* Bowling Green, Kentucky: Kentucky Folklore Society, 1965.

Dorson, Richard M. *Studies in Japanese Folklore.* Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1963.

Dundes, Alan. *The Study of Folklore.* Englewood Cliffs, N. J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1965.
In his introductions to a series of reprinted essays about folklore, Dundes includes valuable discussions of the definitions of folklore, the search for origins, form in folklore, transmission of folklore, and the functions of folklore.

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This book is a good introduction to the methods of collecting folklore in the field.

Krappe, Alexander H. *The Science of Folklore.* New York: N. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1964. (Reissue)
Although this book is an older book, it is still a valuable introduction to the various genres of folklore.

Leach, Maria, Ed. *Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend.* 2 Vols. New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1949.

Thompson, Stith. *Four Symposia on Folklore.* Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1953.
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Thompson, Stith. *Motif-Index of Folk Literature.* 6 Vols. Rev. Ed. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1955-58.

Wolford, Leah Jackson. *The Play-Party in Indiana.* Ed. and Rev. by W. Edson Richmond and William Tillson. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1959.

AMERICAN FOLKLORE

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Blair, Walter, and Franklin J. Meine. *Half Horse Half Alligator: The Growth of the Mike Fink Legend.* Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1956.

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"Here, grounded firmly in American history, is a skilled folklorist's survey of the entire field of America's folklore—from colonization to mass culture." Dorson includes chapters on "Colonial Folklore," "The Rise of Native Folk Humor," "Regional Folk Cultures," "Immigrant Folklore," "The Negro," "A Gallery of Folk Heroes," and "Modern Folklore."

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The Fifes, two experienced folklorists, write about the folklore of the Mormons.

Hoffman, Daniel. *Paul Bunyan: Last of the Frontier Demigods.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1966. (Reissue)

Johnson, Guy B. *John Henry: Tracking Down A Negro Legend.* Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1929.

Korson, George. *Pennsylvania Songs and Legends.* Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1960. (Reissue)

———. *Black Rock—Mining Folklore of the Pennsylvania Dutch.* Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1960.

Paredes, Américo. *"With His Pistol In His Hand"; A Border Ballad And Its Hero.* Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1958.
Gregario Cortez, a Mexican farmer on the lower border of Texas; shot Sheriff W. T. Morris on June 1, 1901. In this book, Paredes discusses the cultural-historical setting, the man and his legend, and the ballad.

Price, Robert. *Johnny Appleseed—Man and Myth.* Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1954.

THE FOLKTALE

Delarue, Paul. *The Borzoi Book of French Folk Tales.* New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1956.

Dorson, Richard M. General Editor. *Folktales of the World.* Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press.

Each of the volumes in this series is edited by a distinguished folklorist from the country represented. The tales are representative of the oral storytelling tradition of the country. Headnotes, glossaries, indexes, bibliographies, tables of international tale types and motifs, and the forwards by the series editor make the books most important. Titles now completed include:

Folktales of Ireland by Sean O'Sullivan

Folktales of Germany by Kurt Ranke

Folktales of Israel by Dov Noy

Folktales of Japan by Keigo Seki

Folktales of Norway by Reidar Th. Christiansen

Folktales of Hungary by Linda Dégh

Folktales of England by Katherine M. Briggs and Ruth L. Tongue

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Nettl, Bruno. *An Introduction to Folk Music in the United States.* 2nd Ed. Detroit, Mich.: Wayne State University Press, 1962.

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Brunvand, Jan Harold. *A Dictionary of Proverbs and Proverbial Phrases from Books Published by Indiana Authors Before* 1890. Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1961.

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